

DIRECTOR, FBI (100-403529)

10/19/61

SAC, WFO (100-39559)

COMMUNIST INFILTRATION OF RELIGION
IS - C

Re Chicago letter to the Bureau dated 9/28/61,
cc WFO.

Referenced letter requested that WFO at the
General Board of Christian Concerns, 100 Maryland Avenue,
N.E., obtain two copies of the booklet entitled "The
Methodist Ministry and Communism; The Truth Behind the
Churches" by PHILIP WOGAMAN.

Pursuant to the request contained in referenced
letter there are enclosed for the Bureau two copies of
this publication.

RUC

② - Bureau (Encs. 2)
1 - Chicago (Info) (RM) (100-33557)
1 - WFO

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The Methodist Ministry
and Communism:

*The Truth
Behind the Charges*

By
PHILIP WOGAMAN

INTRODUCTION

The furor created by the unfounded charges against the National Council of Churches, The Constituent Communions, and Distinguished Christian leaders of the United States, was given impetus by the equally distasteful charges by an organization of Methodists called the Circuit Riders. This organization got under way several years ago to rid The Methodist Church of socialism and communism. While some contribution was undoubtedly served by it prior to the General Conference of 1952, it has become increasingly irresponsible and has been repudiated by the majority, if not all, of the leaders of The Methodist Church.

One of the most glaring examples of irresponsibility and intentionally destructive purposes was the publication of the booklet entitled A COMPILATION OF PUBLIC RECORDS (OF) 2109 METHODIST MINISTERS. It is patently a distorted document. Even a superficial examination reveals this. But it is disturbing to many Methodist laity and clergy. An analysis and answer was needed.

In connection with the Methodist answer to the Air Force Manual charges, a committee of the Council of Bishops and the Council of Secretaries took a variety of steps to inform Methodists of the actual situation. Part of this endeavor was to start a systematic study of this Circuit Rider publication.

The services of Dr. Philip Wogaman were fortunately secured for this study. He is presently connected with the World Division of the Board of Missions, and in the Fall will be Assistant Professor of Bible and Social Ethics at the University of the Pacific. Dr. Wogaman has done a thorough job. The results are presented here. A limited number of copies are available for purchase by those who could effectively use them.

Eugene L. Smith
Division of World Missions
The Methodist Church

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The Methodist Church

THE METHODIST MINISTRY AND COMMUNISM: THE TRUTH BEHIND THE CHARGES

The 1960 General Conference of The Methodist Church has called the attention of every Methodist to the recent attacks upon the National Council of Churches and upon the social action of ministers. Such attacks are not new. Whenever the Church and individual Christians have sought to apply the Gospel to daily life they have met criticism and opposition.

Criticism is often good, of course. But not when it is done to create a climate of distrust and suspicion.

A resolution by the 1960 General Conference expressed regret that an organization of Methodists has helped to create such a climate within the Church. The resolution said that

We regret that any Methodists contribute either money or leadership to such organizations as Circuit Riders, Inc. which utilize the "guilt by association" and "fellow-traveler" approaches as they stir up unjustified suspicion and develop unfounded fears. We direct attention to our general rule concerning "uncharitable conversation," particularly speaking evil of magistrates and ministers.

We call upon any organization which has charges or accusations to make against any Methodist to make them through our church courts so that a jury of peers of the accused may judge the truth or falsity of the accusation.⁽¹⁾

The purpose of the pamphlet is to analyze the charges of the Circuit Riders, Inc. against Methodist ministers.

(1) The full text of the resolution, including a section of the Episcopal Address giving the Bishops' views of the recent attacks, may be found in the back of this pamphlet.

Usually, of course, it is not wise to repeat irresponsible charges, even for the purpose of refuting them. Repeating such attacks only provides them with a wider audience than they deserve. And most intelligent Christians are able to see through them without the need for public refutation.

There are exceptions to this general rule, however. Sometimes irresponsible charges may be put in such a way that they leave lingering doubts. This may be particularly true when the persons being attacked are not well known and when the attack is made during a period of social crisis or uncertainty. When this is the case, the proper course is to give a calm appraisal of the evidence to clear the air.

For this reason and to show that The Methodist Church has nothing to hide, the sweeping charges of Circuit Riders, Inc. against Methodist ministers will be examined here.

No Defense for Communism

It should be said at the outset that this is no effort to defend Communism or ministers who may actually have given uncritical aid to Communist organizations as such. Many perceptive Christian thinkers such as John C. Bennett, William Temple, Emil Brunner, Walter G. Muelder, and others have long held that Communism represents a denial of much that Christianity stands for. Communism, interestingly enough, borrowed some of its beliefs from Christian teachings. But it has neglected other important Christian teachings and it is in open conflict with the basic Christian belief in God. Christians cannot help being disturbed about this.

While those who believe in Communism should doubtless be guaranteed

the same right to any peaceable expression of their views as other Americans. It does not follow that Christians should accept those views as true. For this reason, we shall not be concerned here with trying to defend the statements and actions of ministers who have knowingly contributed to the success of beliefs held by Communists which are contrary to Christian teaching.

The Attack upon Methodist Ministers

"As a minister of The Methodist Church I could not, of course, be either a supporter or a defender of Communism as a way of life. I am not nor have I ever been or thought of being a Communist. I have for many years believed that Americans should have greater confidence in the durability of our free way of life. Undesirable elements in our nation can be strengthened by our fear of them and our actions against them."

--One of the Ministers

The attacks upon the Methodist ministry and Methodism's traditional social concern of which most Methodists are proud, have come primarily from a group calling itself Circuit Riders, Inc. Originally formed in 1951, the main purpose of this organization was to combat the influence of the Methodist Federation for Social Action. The Federation, an unofficial group of Methodists, had stimulated Methodist social thought and action for more than forty years. While the Federation had had a distinguished record of service to the Church and the nation in areas of social concern, it was felt by many that the organization had veered too far to the left in its social views and that some of its leadership had become careless in leaving the impression that it spoke for the entire Church.

A primary aim of Circuit Riders, Inc. was to have the Federation

repudiated by the 1952 General Conference. Largely as a result of its efforts, the Federation was, in effect, reprimanded by that General Conference.

Believing the major task accomplished, many of the members of Circuit Riders, Inc. left the organization in 1952. Circuit Riders, Inc. has continued to function, however, largely under the grip of its executive secretary.

Since 1952, Circuit Riders, Inc., in a well-financed and bitter stream of bulletins, news releases, and booklets, has accused thousands of ministers and teachers of supporting Communism. It is claimed that the charges against many Methodist ministers are documented in a book entitled A COMPILATION OF PUBLIC RECORDS (OF) 2109 METHODIST MINISTERS. This book and other publications of Circuit Riders, Inc. will be subjected to careful scrutiny here in the hope that it may be a help to Methodists who have been upset by the attacks.

The Preparation of This Pamphlet

This study has involved analysis of the booklet, A COMPILATION OF PUBLIC RECORDS (OF) 2109 METHODIST MINISTERS, and other Circuit Riders publications. It has included visits to governmental agencies such as the Subversive Activities Control Board, the U. S. Department of Justice and the House Committee on Un-American Activities. It has involved careful study of the extensive files of Methodist Information, the National Council of Churches, and other materials.

Something has also been done which Circuit Riders, Inc. has never bothered to do. Scores of the ministers who were attacked have been contacted for comment on the charges. Written replies have been received to more than half of the letters of inquiry.

What, exactly, are the charges?

It is difficult to say what the charges are. The booklet on "2109 Methodist Ministers" does not say. It simply lists the names of hundreds of ministers (and a few who are not ministers). After each name there is a list of "items of public record." Here is a sample entry:

JOHN DOE
CALIFORNIA LABOR SCHOOL: Signer of appeal to suspend hearings on CLS, (Press Release, Jan. 6, 1956).
COMMITTEE TO END SEDITION LAWS: Signer of statement (Press Release, Nov. 19, 1955).
METHODIST FEDERATION FOR SOCIAL ACTION: Nominee, (Official Ballot, Sept. 2, 1953).

There is no preface to "2109 Methodist Ministers" and no conclusion. One is allowed to draw one's own conclusions.

In other booklets, pamphlets, and releases of various kinds, however, the Circuit Riders do make certain claims about "2109 Methodist Ministers." For example, a news release which was often inserted in copies of the booklet stated that

The attached copy of A COMPILATION OF PUBLIC RECORDS 2109 METHODIST MINISTERS indicated in part the political, economic and "social gospel" activities of 2109 American Methodist clergymen. "Circuit Riders, Inc." who compiled and published this report, is a national independent group of Methodists who expose and oppose the use of church facilities, programs and personnel for the propagandizing of socialistic activities. The organization states that this record speaks clearly for itself--no inference beyond the test is made or implied.

And in a pamphlet, dated March 29, 1956, the claim is made that

public records show that the names of 2109 Methodist clergymen have appeared from 1 to more than 100 times each in connection with Communist-front enterprises.

A careful reader of these quotations is puzzled. Are the ministers being charged with supporting "Communist-front enterprises" or are they being charged with "political, economic and 'social gospel' activities"? Or are the Circuit Riders under the impression that all "political, economic and 'social gospel' activities" are "Communist-front enterprises"?

In a democracy where everybody is supposed to take part in political and economic activities, this latter claim could be dismissed quickly enough. Indeed, Circuit Riders, Inc. itself, in many of its pamphlets and releases, is involved to the hilt in political and economic agitation.

The term "social gospel," however, may not be familiar to some readers. Broadly speaking, "social gospel" is a term which has been used for the past half century or so to describe the attempt to apply Christianity to social problems. The "Social Gospel Movement" began largely as a response by Christians to the grave problems which confronted the American scene sixty years ago, such as child labor, industrial safety, adulteration of food, excessive profiteering, too long working hours for too little pay, and the like. While a number of the early leaders of the "social gospel" were socialist--believing in the state's ownership of the means of production, most were not. And leaders of the movement, such as Walter Rauschenbusch, were very critical of Marxism.

Today, few theologians really like the term "social gospel" since it is generally accepted by most Christians everywhere that the Gospel cannot be split up into "social" and "individual." Rather, it is believed that the Gospel involves the whole man, both as an individual and ~~in his social relationships.~~ In any case, however, only the poorly

informed would refer to the social gospel as "Communist" or "Communist-front."

Even a casual survey of the organizations listed in "2109 Methodist Ministers" would show that the Circuit Riders are badly confused about all this. Organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union and the Fraternal Council of Churches in America, which are liberal but not Communist, are indiscriminately tossed in with organizations like the Jefferson School of Social Science and the Communist Party of Queens, both of which are admittedly Communist-dominated.

The organizations and activities listed all do seem to have one thing in common: they represent somebody's idea of how to make society better. Or they represent somebody's conception of justice. There probably are sound reasons why a Christian should be very cautious about lending a hand to organizations which are dominated by Communists, even for apparently laudable purposes. But when organizations which are Communist-dominated are thrown in with organizations which are not, one begins to wonder whether the Circuit Riders may not actually be trying to attack all groups which differ with their own social and economic ideas. Calling such groups "Communist" or "Communist-front" is an easy way to attack them. But it is not fair. And it is not true.

On the basis of the foregoing, it is apparent that the charges of Circuit Riders, Inc. against "2109 Methodist Ministers" are badly confused, if not almost worthless.

Nevertheless, there undoubtedly are Methodists who would like to know more specifically about the list and whether ministers have been

proven actually to have aided Communism. Accordingly, further examination of the booklet here is in order.

The first thing one learns, curiously enough, is that there are not 2109 names listed at all. Only about 545 names are actually given. On the last page of the booklet there is a list of organizations and activities with the number of Methodist ministers supposedly involved with them. These unnamed Methodist ministers are those "who have one or two items of Public Record." Presumably the ministers involved here, added to the 545 whose names are listed, would add up to 2109. But there is no way to check this further on the basis of the booklet.

As nearly as one can tell, there are about 345 different organizations or enterprises named throughout the booklet.

In order to discover more about the alleged affiliations they may be compared with the U.S. Attorney General's list of subversive organizations. The Attorney General's list of organizations is compiled in accordance with Executive Order 9835, of 1947, and Executive Order 10450, of 1953, relating to the loyalty of government employees. The list is supposed to contain

The name of each foreign or domestic organization, association, movement, group or combination of persons which the Attorney General, after appropriate investigation and determination, designates as totalitarian, fascist, communist or subversive, or as having adopted a policy of advocating or approving the commission of acts of force or violence to deny others their rights under the Constitution of the United States, or as seeking to alter the form of government of the United States by unconstitutional means.

If there is anywhere an accurate listing of such organizations, the Attorney General's list is probably it. ~~With his full access to the~~

services of the F. B. I. and the trained staff personnel and lawyers of the Department of Justice, the Attorney General could hardly be accused of overlooking very many Communist or Communist front organizations.

Yet, of the 345 organizations and enterprises listed in the "2109 Methodist Ministers" booklet, only some 55 are on the Attorney General's list.

The Methodist Federation for Social Action is one of the 290 organizations which are not on the Attorney General's list. Despite the highly controversial opinions and activities of some of its leaders, the Federation has never been listed by the Attorney General.

Comparing the alleged affiliations in "2109 Methodist Ministers" with organizations which are on the Attorney General's list, it can be shown that only 213 of the 545 ministers whose names are actually given are listed as having been involved with such organizations in any way. It will be remembered that the last page of the booklet lists 1803 alleged instances of relationships of ministers with organizations without naming the ministers. Of these alleged affiliations, only 58 clearly involve some relationship to organizations or enterprises on the Attorney General's list. (And this would probably involve even fewer actual ministers in view of overlapping.) Thus, fewer than 271 ministers (out of 2109) are even accused of having been related at some time, in some way, to organizations cited by the Attorney General. The 1959 General Minutes of The Methodist Church, incidentally, indicates that there are more than 27,000 Methodist ministers in the United States.

What about the 271 ministers who ARE accused in some way of having been connected with organizations on the Attorney General's List?

There is, as suggested above, no way to check the 58 or fewer ministers whose names are not given on the last page of the booklet. Of the remaining 213 whose names are listed, however, 31 are not to be found in the official General Minutes (which lists all active and retired ministers in the Church). Two of these names are known not to be ministers. The rest of the 31 are not known at all. This means that they are not living, that they were removed, or that they too were erroneously described as ministers. An additional ten of the 213 are known not to be living. An additional 54 of the 213 are retired. This leaves only some 118 who are now active Methodist ministers. Most of these had only one or two listings related to organizations cited by the Attorney General.

In order to find out more specifically about these cases, letters of inquiry were sent both to the active and to the retired ministers who are alleged to have had some affiliation with organizations on the Attorney General's list. A statistically excellent response was received, with more than half of the Men taking the trouble to answer the form letter of inquiry.

A number of the ministers absolutely denied having been affiliated in any way with the organizations as listed. These listings could be accounted for either by errors on the part of the Circuit Riders or by the unauthorized use of names by Communist-front groups. Thus, one minister writes that

I have never lived in Southern California and was never a sponsor of the Southern California Committee to Win the Peace. There was a similar organization with headquarters in San Francisco which used my name without my consent on a letterhead which they had printed. As soon as I discovered that they were using my name, I called them on the telephone and wrote them a letter requesting them to remove my name immediately.

And a district superintendent writes that

I knew nothing of this before I received your letter.... The matter to which you refer I can only presume is traceable to some such ruthless procedures as I have suggested above. Take a conscienceless Communist, putting out statements over the names of people who were never consulted, and add to that an equally conscienceless reactionary who is willing to believe the Daily Worker only when it leads to slander and defamation of character...and you have two items that add up to a brutal, un-American, vicious practice!

Thus; a number of the men deny having had these contacts at all.

,About the others

Most of the men, however, agreed that the listed affiliations were at least partially accurate. In judging the importance of these affiliations one should try to remember three things about them: (1) that even the Attorney General's list must be used with extreme caution, (2) that the dates of organizational affiliations are very important, and (3) that the kind of connection the person had with the organization is very important.

Each of these things deserves further discussion.

(1) Even the Attorney General's List Must Be Used with Extreme Caution. --Even though it is generally accepted as the most reputable listing of Communist and Communist-front organizations in existence, the Attorney General's list itself is not fully reliable. A number of the organizations which are currently listed have not been in existence for many years. For example, the American League against War and Fascism (or American League for Peace and Democracy) went out of existence around 1941.

There is also some doubt as to whether all of the organizations

actually have been dominated by Communists. In a Supreme Court case (see 341 U.S. 123, 71), the list was ruled insufficient evidence for designating an organization "communistic". In a later U.S. Appeals Court decision, the Attorney General's list was referred to as

A purely hearsay declaration by the Attorney General, and could have no probative value in the trial of this defendant. It has no competency to prove the subversive character of the listed associations....

(See 191 F. 2d 246)

Federal laws (of 1950 and 1954) require organizations cited as "Communist Action", "Communist Front", or "Communist Infiltrated" to register with the Subversive Activities Control Board. The Attorney General is the federal officer designated to list these organizations, and an appeal procedure is provided. Thus far (as of March, 1961) none of the organizations thus listed have been required by the courts to comply with the provisions of the laws. If the laws are finally ruled to be constitutional, a number of the organizations--including, for example, the Communist Party itself--will be required so to register. But in the meantime there is real doubt as to whether the evidence under which a number of the organizations have been cited will stand up in court.

Until the organizations on the Attorney General's list have been duly charged before the Subversive Activities Control Board and have exhausted their appeals before the courts, one cannot assume that they have been proved to be or to have been Communist-dominated.

Many of the organizations doubtless are Communist-dominated. But the point is that the list must be used with caution. The responsible person would want to know more about the organizations and the alleged affiliations before forming any final judgments.

A final word of caution may be said along this line. The Attorney General's list is not detailed as to the nature of the organizations. It does not say whether they are totalitarian, fascist, communist or subversive. It does not show how much the organizations are dominated by such tendencies. Nor is this additional information supplied upon request. In preparation of this pamphlet, the Justice Department was visited in Washington, and additional information on the various organizations was requested. The reception was courteous, but the requested information was not made available.

(2) The Dates Of Organizational Affiliations Are Very Important.--

In trying to assess the judgment of the ministers whom we are considering, it is important to remember that the whole political climate in the United States has fluctuated enormously in the past thirty years.

During the 1930's our country was struggling out of the depths of a major economic depression. Problems such as widespread unemployment and hunger and the collapse of many credit institutions shook the faith of many sensitive Americans in the workability of a basically capitalistic economy. Radical changes in the economic system seemed much more sensible during those years than they do during the present period of prosperity. Further, the rise of the great dictatorships in Europe--Mussolini in Italy, Hitler in Germany, Franco in Spain--and the increasingly militaristic outlook of Japan in the Orient, all seemed a much more pressing danger than did any threat from the Soviet Union. Groups such as the American League Against War and Fascism, the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, and the China Welfare Appeal had a wide appeal among those who were more alert to the dangers of fascism

than they were to any dangers in cooperating with Communists.

Nine of the 213 ministers whose names are given in connection with organizations on the Attorney General's list have had no connections with such organizations since 1939.

From 1940 to 1946 the political climate in America was almost totally dominated by World War II. During these years, Russia was considered our great ally to the east, and efforts were made in the public press and in statements by national leaders to play down any rivalry between the United States and Russia. Organizations such as the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship (now on the Attorney General's list) sprang up to encourage more friendship between Americans and Russians. These organizations were widely supported by national leaders as well as by ministers. For example, General Dwight D. Eisenhower sent this message to the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship in November of 1945:

American-Soviet friendship is one of the cornerstones on which the edifice of peace should be built. To achieve this friendship, nothing is more important than mutual understanding on the part of each of the institutions, traditions, and customs of the other. As an American soldier and lover of peace, I wish your Council the utmost success in the worthy work it has undertaken.

Other prominent persons giving moral support to this organization included President Roosevelt, Acting Secretary of State Stettinius, Field Marshal Montgomery, industrialist Henry J. Kaiser, and others. Yet Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam and other Methodist ministers have been criticized by Circuit Riders, Inc. for aiding such organizations during World War II.

Significantly, only 121 ministers are listed by name as having

been involved with any organizations on the Attorney General's list after 1946. Of these, again, several are no longer living, some deny the listings flatly, and some are not identifiable as Methodist ministers.

It was not until a year or so following World War II that relations between the United States and Russia began seriously to deteriorate. The general national policy of disarmament and demobilization was rudely shattered with the coming of the "Cold War". During this period many Americans began seriously to be concerned about the threat of subversion. The mood of national insecurity and anxiety was heightened by the Korean War, which began in 1950 and continued until 1953. During this period a number of ministers cooperated with what in some instances have been shown to have been Communist-front enterprises in seeking to end the Korean conflict. And a number of ministers similarly cooperated in seeking to defend the Bill of Rights against what they considered to be the results of hysteria.

More will be said later about the motivations of the ministers involved in these affiliations during the three-decade period. But the point needs to be underscored again here that it is not possible to judge these affiliations without careful understanding of the history of the period.

In another way it is important to pay attention to the dates of organizational affiliations. In several cases Communists were not successful in taking control of organizations until some time after the organization had been founded. The remarkable thing is that persons now accused of being fellow-travelers were often the very ones who were fighting against Communist control.

One minister, for example, who was charged before the House Un-American Activities Committee and later by the Circuit Riders, had this to say:

The charge before the House Un-American Activities Committee that I am or ever was part of a Communist conspiracy is utterly false. I never have been a Communist sympathizer or a Communist party member....

On the contrary, I have the following record of opposing Communists and the Communist Party policies:

In 1934, Communists bodily threw me down the stairs leading to the United Textile Workers hall in Allentown, Pa., because I opposed their dual union policy.

In 1939, I was instrumental in persuading the Executive Committee of the Methodist Federation for Social Service to condemn the Soviet Union for invading Finland...

In 1949, I voted, as a delegate to the National CIO Convention, for the expulsion from the National CIO of those CIO Unions whose leadership had been taken over by Communists.

In 1950, I publicly and vigorously opposed the so-called "Stockholm Peace Petition" on the grounds that this petition was a weapon of the Soviet Union in the "cold war" with our country.

Another minister writes,

I was perfectly conscious that some of the people associated with me were Communists. I was using them and their energies to accomplish the goals I felt I must strive for. When they went afield, pursuing goals which I could not accept, I did not go with them....

.... On one occasion the State Secretary of the Communist Party came before the group and asked that we take a certain position, and I left the chair and opposed him and won the fight.

(3) It is Important to Know the Kind of Connection the Person Had with the Organization.--It should be obvious that the degree of sympathy a minister has had for an organization is largely shown by how ~~close his connection with it has been.~~

The listings in the booklet "2109 Methodist Ministers" include many kinds of connections. They extend all the way from chairman of a group to so slight a connection as signing a petition circulated by a group.

To illustrate how slight a connection is sometimes referred to in the booklet, there is at least one instance in which an individual is cited because an organization supported him. In that particular case, an organization with which he had no connection passed a resolution of support for Bishop Oxnam during his celebrated 1953 appearance before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Citing this instance is like saying that the President is a Communist sympathizer because he received some Communist votes. In neither case was the support solicited.

While there are a few listings in the booklet which indicate the closer kinds of connection, in most cases the involvement is slight.

Of the 213 names ministers who are listed as being affiliated with organizations on the Attorney General's list, 109 did nothing more than sign a statement, petition, or appeal having nothing to do with the organizations as such but involving some social concern. Illustrative of these would be the following entries:

"Signer of open letter for repeal of Walter-McCarran Act."

"Signer of statement condemning deportations."

"Signer of statement supporting right to teach Marxism."

"Signer of telegram to the Governor of Maryland on Relief and Unemployment."

All of these cases might involve controversial issues, of course. But a person holding the points of view of such petitions would be fully loyal to his country and to his Christian faith. In most cases substantial

questions relating to constitutional rights are involved, regardless of any possible connection of the petitions with the Communist movement. In the nature of the case, civil rights issues usually come up in connection with unpopular groups, such as the Communist Party or the Jehovah's Witnesses. Support for the rights of such groups should never be confused with support of the groups themselves. And it should be remembered here again that several of the 109 who are listed as doing nothing more serious than signing statements are no longer living, are retired, or have denied the charge flatly.

Three of the listed ministers are involved to the extent of having made a speech at some function sponsored by one of the organizations on the Attorney General's list. Here it must be said that a great deal would obviously depend upon what was said in the speech. In one case a minister writes that

As I remember the lecture, I spoke in the middle of the war for the ideal of Tolstoyan pacifism at a time when our nation and the Russians were allied in fighting Hitler's Germany. If this was Communism, let them make the most of it. As I remember the lecture, sixteen long years ago, the question period was a time in which those who might have been Communists were very bitter about my pacifist views.

It is worth asking at this point whether Christians may not have the duty to seek out and give their Christian witness before Communists. It would be a mistake to say that St. Paul was an idolator because he preached to idolators at Ephesus. All Christians would say that it was his duty. If the Christian gospel is as powerful as Communism, what should a minister have to fear from such an encounter? One wonders how often groups like the Circuit Riders have sought such encounters, and how much ~~they really care for the immortal souls of Communists.~~

Of the remaining 101 names, 36 are listed as being sponsors or endorsers of particular meetings or appeals. The following would be typical of some of these listings:

"Endorser of congress on American-Soviet relations"
"Sponsor of national conference" of the American Committee for the Protection of Foreign born
"Initial sponsor, National Peace Referendum"
"Endorser of First New England Youth Conference."

While this connection would be closer than that of merely signing a petition or statement, one should remember here again that sponsorship of such activities has often reflected little more than giving permission to use one's name in connection with what may seem to be a worthy event. In many cases, as suggested above, names have been used even without the permission of their owners. Further, even when a minister has willingly cooperated with an event of this kind it is less important than being a member or continual participant in the sponsoring organization itself.

Of the remaining 65 names, 37 are listed as being sponsors, endorsers, or members of advisory committees for groups on the Attorney General's list. Here, again, sponsorship can mean almost anything. It can range from real sympathy for the organization and its purposes to having one's name used without permission. In any case, these 37 are not listed as having full membership in the organizations themselves.

Of the remaining 28 names, 18 are listed as having been committee members or officers of organizations on the Attorney General's list, and ten are listed as having been chairmen of such organizations or their subsidiaries. In most cases these are accurate listings. In a few instances, correspondence and research would suggest that ministers

were consciously cooperating with Communists. Some of these men may have been impressed by the positive aspects of Communism and the Russian revolution to the point of overlooking the terrors of Stalinism, the cynicism and duplicity of so much of Communist activity, and other problems.

While most Methodists would disagree with their judgment and probably deplore their involvements, this tiny group of men has been under fire for years. And none of them has been charged successfully with having violated anything in his ordination vows. In one case a minister was accused of having been a Communist by witnesses before the House Un-American Activities Committee. He flatly denied the charges and accused the witnesses themselves of lying. The fact that he himself was not indicted for perjury suggests that the accusing witnesses may have been less than reliable. This minister's bishop asserted that he would support him until he had been convicted of anything. And his congregation indicated its support as well.

Another of the most involved ministers asserted that

All testimony charging me with Communist Party membership or activities under its direction is completely false. I am not and never have been a member of any political party. My judgment and actions concerning political and economic issues are derived from the basic ethical principles of the religion of Jesus, of which I am minister and teacher.

This minister indicated his readiness to appear before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1953 to defend his reputation, but he was never called.

Before leaving this small group of 28 ministers who are cited as being more closely connected with organizations on the Attorney General's ~~list it should, of course, be pointed out that several are strongly~~

anti-communist in their feelings. One of them writes documenting decades of his own resistance to communist activity. Another was the chairman of a Russian-American friendship group for a brief period during World War II before he was fully aware of the nature of the organization. He then left it. Still another, who is a district superintendent, illustrates the flimsy connection that several had:

I recall that I regarded Harry Bridges as wrongly charged and that I made a contribution to some organization that was working in his behalf.

I am quite sure that I did not give permission that my name be used as a member of such organization, as I did not have sufficient information to identify myself with the effort in that manner. I do not recall having seen any such letterhead as you say indicates me as a member. I am sure that I did make a contribution for this purpose. I also have the memory, right or wrong, that subsequent court action did not sustain the charges made at that time.

There is no way of knowing precisely how many of the ministers are active collaborators with the Communist movement. The number is so small that most people will not particularly care. But, for what it is worth, a very able investigator, who is also a Methodist minister, has spent years writing a book on the actual infiltration of Communist influence into American churches.⁽¹⁾ This minister, the Rev. Ralph L. Roy, has said that "Communist influence among the American clergy today is almost negligible". The number? Out of 300,000 ordained Protestant ministers in this country he believes that "only twenty-five are willing and knowing collaborators of the Communists".

(1) Ralph L. Roy, Communism and the Churches (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1960)

It is important to remember one thing more at this point: regardless of political judgment or lack of it, no Methodist minister has ever been proved in a church court or in a court of law to have placed his loyalty to the teachings of Marx ahead of his loyalty to God and his country. In today's complex world this is remarkable indeed.

On the basis of the foregoing points the lack of any foundation for sweeping charges, such as those made concerning "2109 Methodist Ministers", is clearly evident. The 1960 General Conference was very wise and just in saying that

we call upon any organization which has charges or accusations to make against any Methodist to make them through our church courts so that a jury of peers of the accused may judge the truth or falsity of the accusation.

The Motivation of the Ministers

One aspect of the charges against "2109 Methodist Ministers" remains to be discussed more fully. That is the question, why did the ministers become connected with the various groups and causes which are listed?

Circuit Riders, Inc. would say that this is a foolish question. In one of its publications the following statement is made:

It makes little or no difference whether this assistance is given wittingly or otherwise. In either case, the objective results are the same. The security of the United States--our very existence as a free people-- is at stake.

It may be tempting to believe that the signing of petitions and the affiliations with organizations and causes, as described in "2109 Methodist Ministers", has harmful results regardless of the motivations of the ministers. But one must remember three things:

(1) The great majority of the organizations represented in the booklet are not even on the Attorney General's list. This point has clearly been made above. And if one is willing to say that the other associations indirectly result in furthering the Communist cause, one may say even more truly that the loose accusations of groups like the Circuit Riders are what really undermine faith in a democratic society.

(2) Even the ministers, few in number, who have cooperated with Communist groups have done so only with respect to the goals and purposes in which they have themselves believed. The results would be vastly different from the results if the ministers were willing to go along with Communists for all Communist objectives.

(3) The third point is closely related: Communist interest in good things does not make them bad. Circuit Riders, Inc. seems confused

about this. One should not oppose things just because they happen to be favored by Communists. The fact that Communists in some cases seek good things for inadequate or poor reasons should not keep Christians from seeking the same good things for the right reasons. Communists believe in sanitation and health. Should that keep Christians from believing in sanitation and health? Communists have claimed an interest in justice for minority groups. But don't Christians have an even more sensitive interest in justice for minority groups? Communists deplore unemployment and hunger. But don't we all?

The distinguished Episcopal Bishop of California, Bishop James Pike, once remarked that "we have gone beyond 'guilt by association' to 'guilt by mutual object'". He continued,

A man's name need not be on a letterhead or committee any more to be grouped with some communist-fronter. Now if a man signs a petition for a particular objective and a communist-fronter signs the same petition, then that is supposed to make the first man a part of the "red" apparatus. This is, of course, ridiculous; but it is more than that. It is damaging to the whole democratic process, to the right of petition itself. It is putting the damper on voluntary mutual effort for certain social objectives or for defense against certain abuses.

To show how false such reasoning is, let us take an example. Let us suppose that A signs a petition for clemency for the Rosenbergs because he is against capital punishment under any and all circumstances. B signs it because he is a relative of the Rosenbergs and doesn't want to see his relative die; C signs it because he is a lawyer who thinks that the Supreme Court was wrong on a certain point; D signs it because he is a communist.

Now does this prove that A, B or C are Communists, or fronters, or dupes of the "red" machine? No! They may all be arch-Republicans for that matter. I think they are wrong because I think the Rosenbergs were rightfully executed; but not everybody who disagrees with me, for whatever reason, is to be called "red".

One may add that The Methodist Church itself is officially opposed

to capital punishment. But, aside from this, it would be a pitiable thing indeed if Communists were to be able to claim credit as being the only ones interested in justice and human welfare.

A person's reasons for doing things thus make all the difference in the world. In the Church it is assumed that everybody--ministers and laymen alike--should respond to the will of God in particular situations. Since all are human beings, it is expected that everybody will make mistakes. But it would be worse than a mistake for a person to turn his back upon what he clearly feels to be the will of God. That would be sin. In saying this, of course, we must remember that a Christian ought always to be careful in the absolute claims he makes about what the will of God is in any particular situation. And we must also remember, on the other hand, that a person should be careful in criticizing others who are sincere in believing certain things to be the will of God.

Why did the ministers become connected with various causes which now have come under criticism?

In the letters of inquiry to these ministers each one was asked to give a brief statement of motivation. Following is a representative sampling of these statements.

MASSACHUSETTS

As for motivation, it would be a Christian concern for any and all persons who were, or are, in any way oppressed or discriminated against. And I would be, and am, as deeply concerned for the protection of racial, religious, and political minorities, as for those who are foreign-born. Unless such groups were shown, beyond any reasonable doubt to be harmful to our national welfare, I would do all in my power to help them.

PENNSYLVANIA

My actions were motivated by Christian convictions.

SOUTH DAKOTA

During my ministry I have deliberately sought persons with whom I have disagreed, and have strongly desired to associate with them. On the other hand, I have tried to bring persons together to work on common interests in specific areas, even though there may be diverse opinions in other areas. The Church never becomes the apologist for the "status quo" nor for the Kingdoms of this world...It does not make me feel comfortable that I am writing this letter. It seems to indicate that in some way my Church is lending dignity to the argument that a nation or an economic view is the Kingdom of God. I am sure that this is not your intent or, of course, I would not answer. Even worse is this basic attitude that the Christian is one who sets himself in the cage of association without mission, without reconciliation, without love. The only answer which these people offer us is fear, hate, violence. In the presence of God I cannot afford to be "cowed" by these and my prayer is that my Church will also take this position.

WISCONSIN

I signed the Appeal for Amnesty and found myself in very good company with thousands of people who wanted to protest against the Smith Act. As you know a strong minority of four of the Supreme Court judged the Smith Act to be unconstitutional. By signing the appeal I intended to raise the issue vividly in the American mind and hoped for some moderation of our McCarthy mood.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

My position has always been that even communists should have the right of free speech, of fair trial, etc., and it was in defense of such liberties that my name appeared. I am quite ready to say at any time that groups like the Circuit Riders that oppose such liberties are the real subversives.

MISSOURI

I have not knowingly followed a communist line as such nor supported personalities as such. I have signed many open letters in the interest of American constitutional matters affecting people and principles to help safeguard our spiritual and political heritage. I have been a member of the Methodist Federation for Social Action for 30 years and believe in its Christian character and Prophetic voice.

MICHIGAN

As one who has tried to apply the ideals of Christ to life, any action I have taken was an attempt to relate the Christian teachings to the personal and social life of the day. Believing Christ was a man of peace, any program or activities in which I participated was an attempt to implement the gospel of Christ in the life of the world.

IOWA

I have quite generally protested whenever I sensed injustice and discrimination. I have kept no record and I cannot remember, of course, what letters I wrote nor to whom. It may well be that I am guilty of all the charges that the Circuit Riders have brought against me. But I shall just go on trying to be a Christian and trying to apply the teachings of Christ and the spirit of Christ to every one of our complex social problems.

OHIO

My motivation in every case is for justice, fairplay and the best interests of the U.S.. I reserve the right, which is constitutional, to criticize any action of the government that I deem unfair, and unpatriotic. That doesn't mean that I don't love my country. I do it because I do love my country. I am jealous of its well-being and standing among men and nations. It is possible for the Un-A.C. (House Committee on Un-American Activities) to be very un-patriotic themselves but they being gods are of course divinely right.

FLORIDA

I am a Christian pacifist and as such have always been partial to peace movements. I have no recollection of sponsoring the particular group named.

MASSACHUSETTS

Because it may be relevant to the investigation you are now making may I state that during the thirties and most of the forties my political alignments were with the Socialist Party under the leadership of Norman Thomas...Anyone who knows the intense conflict between the Socialist Party of America and the Communist Party would also know that a Socialist would be unusually careful not to become involved in the Communist apparatus. At the same time I should like to state that a long time defender of Civil Liberties I would be as eager to defend the Civil Liberties rights of Communists as of any other persons. I did not, however, sign a Civil Rights Congress statement in 1947.

CALIFORNIA

...I do know that at that time (1940), I was quite a believer in the New Deal, and in sympathy with liberal attitudes of most all natures. I was sympathetic to the easing of tensions and growing friendship with Russia and also, I never at anytime was a believer in even the mild forms of Communism, I always felt and still do that they, and Fascists too have the right to a fair and open fight in all fields for expressing their opinions... As a confirmed Pacifist all my preaching ministry, I have consistently stood against war. So, when Russia was embroiled in the war...I was disillusioned about the Communists who had been fighting to keep us out, and then turned to the other tact altogether.

CONNECTICUT

I have your letter stating that you are making an investigation or research on the, "CIRCUIT RIDERS". I would certainly like to see some of those fat boys on a horse...all of this is due to my belief in democracy. They all come from the time when the legitimate democracy of France was making fight against the Fascist dictator Franco. I was in favor of the legitimate democracy of ^{France} and joined a number of petitions coming out in favor of this democracy. But as you know as the war went on, later on it became an evil thing to have raised a voice in behalf of democracy against Fascism. That is the whole situation in regard to me.

NEW JERSEY

That I, along with many others, may have made judgments during the 30's and 40's different from those which I would make today at some points is probably true; although I am surprised to discover that there are not many points at which I would seriously disagree with the positions I took during that period. The basic matter, however, is that of bringing the Protestant Christian Faith and Witness to bear upon every aspect of life.

COLORADO

I have not in my memory and certainly with no intention ever endorsed any Communist or totalitarian-sponsored document. I am utterly opposed to such doctrines. Yet, I have been repeatedly attacked on this basis because of my interpretation of the whole Gospel of the Lord as I see it. Such probably explains the accusations.

It would be difficult indeed to summarize these statements and the many others which were sent to us by accused ministers. All of these men are obviously individuals who are able to think for themselves. Most are very earnest about their concern for the welfare and the rights of others, and seem willing to risk criticism to make this concern known. The reader will note differences of judgment as to the degree of association a Christian should have with Communists. But there is no evidence that the vast majority of these men were willingly the tools of Communists. And there are no grounds for questioning their sincerity.

CONCLUSION

That the charges made against Methodist ministers lack justice and charity, most Christians would agree. That the "Circuit Riders" and others of their persuasion are badly confused or wilfully mischievous, few could deny. But it is possible that most Christians would be even more concerned about still another deficiency. That is, in listing the "items of public record" of hundreds of ministers, nothing was said about the great public contributions of the ministries of these men. Hundreds of thousands of lay Methodists would be able to testify to the hours of pastoral care, the sincere sermons, the splendid Christian witness of these men of God. Men like Dr. Ralph Sockman, Dr. Harold Bosley, Bishops Nolan B. Harmon, Paul B. Kern, and G. Bromley Oxnam--all mentioned in the book--have been powerful instruments in the hand of God to whom our Church and our nation owe a profound debt of gratitude. The same could be said of the overwhelming majority of the hundreds of other listed ministers who are less well known. When the history of our church during these troubled times has been fully written, it may

well be found that some of our ministers have made mistakes of judgment --even a few serious mistakes. But none of these mistakes equal the folly of the attacks which have been made upon them as persons and as servants of God.

A Resolution by the 1960 General Conference:

"ATTACKS UPON CHURCHES AND CHURCHMEN"

We express concern during the past quadrennium that there have been individuals and organizations endeavoring to silence the voice of the church and the voices of individual churchmen who strive to bring Christian ideals to bear upon controversial social and political issues.

We strongly approve of the following statement from the 1960 Episcopal address, "We register vigorous protest against viciously false statements that have been made, and are being made, concerning prominent Protestant churchmen--men of unimpeachable character, patriotism, and loyalty to Christ. These assaults are also being made upon the world Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches and other agencies of cooperation among Protestant and Orthodox churches. It is even more regrettable that, at a time when there was never greater need to emphasize the essential unity of the Christian Church, some of these baseless charges emanate from individuals and groups who bear the name of Christ. We commend the officials of the Air Force for the prompt apology given to the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A. for the incredible blunder of allowing some of these slanderous charges to be included in a training manual. This incident is but another indication of the subtle and alarming growth of a procedure

by which an American citizen whose name has been brought into question by irresponsible, and, at times, malicious rumor, must prove himself innocent of disloyalty and subversion and that before an agency of the government which has no judicial authority and whose methods of prosecution are devoid of the safeguards which are constitutionally guaranteed to the individual citizen. This is a frightening reversal of an inalienable heritage, dear to every American. The preservation of this inherent freedom is worthy of the most dedicated and determined effort of all our citizens, churchmen and non-churchmen alike."

We regret that any Methodists contribute either money or leadership to such organizations as Circuit Riders, Inc. which utilize the "guilt by association" and "fellow-traveler" approaches as they stir up unjustified suspicion and develop unfounded fears. We direct attention to our general rule concerning "uncharitable or unprofitable conversation, particularly speaking evil of magistrates and ministers".

We call upon any organization which has charges or accusations to make against any Methodist to make them through our church courts so that a jury of peers of the accused may judge the truth or falsity of the accusation.

--Adopted by the General Conference of
The Methodist Church,
May 13, 1960, Denver, Colorado